

# Engaging People, Linking the World –

## Broadband Planning Activities Update Report



The Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC), University of Nebraska - Lincoln (UNL), Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) and the AIM Institute are cooperatively leading the effort to address the broadband planning needs of Nebraska's communities. The update is focused around the three project areas – Capacity Building, Technical Assistance and Regional Planning.

### Capacity Building - \$715,538 Direct; \$885,417 Total

This project will benchmark technology use across relevant community sectors; set goals for improved technology use within each sector; and develop a plan for achieving its goals, with specific recommendations for web-based application development and demand creation. Projects include:

- **Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: Household Survey UNL.** Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future. 6600 Nebraskans were surveyed in February 2010 – 47% response rate. Survey results are available at [broadband.nebraska.gov](http://broadband.nebraska.gov). **Status:** Follow-up Survey conducted Q1 2014. A 35% response rate was achieved. Some preliminary findings include: More than eight in ten Nebraska households (82%) currently have broadband Internet service compared to 76% households in 2010. During the past four years the proportion of persons age 65 and older having broadband service at home increased from 48 percent to 64 percent. And, the proportion of persons with the lowest household incomes having broadband service at home increased from 44 percent to 53 percent.
- **Business Survey DED.** Businesses will be surveyed through the Business Retention and Expansion process to identify the strengths and challenges they face in utilizing technology. Businesses continue to be surveyed using DED's BR&E program. Data has been gathered from over 400 key businesses. Sixteen communities currently hold a license to input data in eSynchronist. **Status:** DED continues to encourage communities to share broadband data in the BR&E program.
- **Inventory of Broadband and Digital Literacy Programs UNL.** In order to identify potential partners and to avoid duplication of efforts, an inventory of broadband and digital literacy programs will be conducted. **Status:** Resources continue to be gathered and updated on the broadband website - <http://broadband.nebraska.gov> site. This page will transition to a site that will be maintained after the grant.
- **Focused Surveys UNL.** Focused surveys in regions where there are large numbers of non-adopters will help to better understand how to increase broadband adoption. The focused survey effort will primarily be around business and we are working with the Strategic Network Group (SNG) to conduct the business survey, establish benchmarks and to provide tools to share with businesses. **Status:** Reported in Quarter 1 2014, over 1,100 organizations (881 businesses) completed the SNG business survey assessment launched in September 2013. Nebraska businesses are utilizing technology applications such as teleworking and selling goods/services more than other states that have been surveyed by SNG regardless of the region that the business is located. Currently pulling together the regional results which will be highlighted during Quarter 3. Initial review shows that the regions are all using broadband;

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however, vary on their satisfaction with service. No matter the region, broadband is essential for a business to continue to locate in that region.

- **Government and Economic Developer Survey UNL.** Nebraska Economic Development Association, Nebraska Association of County Officials and League of Nebraska Municipality surveys were conducted in 2012. *Status:* This activity is complete. Survey results continue to be reviewed for planning purposes.
- **Creating Broadband Plan/Administrative UNL.** Regional technology plans as well as a statewide report and recommendations will be created through project. *Status:* Continue to explore ways to draw individuals to the broadband map and overall project. Since 2010, 31 press releases have been released associated to the broadband project with multiple social media efforts. During Quarter 2, press releases featured the videos of the broadband technology fairs and the follow-up broadband household survey. Sustainability has become a focus of the Broadband Planning and Mapping efforts. One piece that is being planned is a final report with an executive summary that will provide an update on efforts and impacts accomplished in the broadband plan. To capture impacts, an evaluation will be conducted.

#### **Technical Assistance - \$1,064,471 Direct; \$1,193,068 Total**

The Nebraska Broadband Technical Assistance Program will provide technical assistance on supporting entrepreneurs through technology, and other topics to local governments, chambers of commerce, and economic developers especially in areas with lower than average broadband subscribership. Projects include:

- **Statewide Conference AIM Institute.** Conduct Statewide Conference focused on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status.* The 2014 Broadband Connecting Nebraska Conference will be held at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney on October 1 & 2. A youth track is planned, and Keith Adams, Deputy Administrator of the Rural Utilities Service, USDA Rural Development is confirmed. The opening session will highlight the importance of maker spaces in driving creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship. Breakout sessions will feature topics around the broadband plan. The luncheon keynote will highlight Daniel Sieberg, Senior Marketing Manager with Google. Details on the conference are available at the Nebraska Broadband Initiative project portal at <http://broadband.nebraska>.
- **Regional Workshops UNL.** Regional Workshops will be held to address specific issues related to an area on broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Over 140 businesses attended eight technology fairs. Evaluation results show that over 80% of the participants will use or share information related to the cloud while 70% are using or sharing the information on cool tools, remote video sensing and security. Nearly 90% of the participants want to be informed of future technology related sessions and 80% indicated they would attend a similar fair.
- **Webinars UNL.** Up to four webinars will be held each year of the grant to address broadband adoption and utilization. *Status:* Webinars are archived at <http://broadband.nebraska.gov/events>
- **Best Practice Videos UNL/AIM Institute.** At least 20 examples of best practices in expanding broadband adoption across Nebraska will be highlighted. 44 videos have now been launched through the broadband efforts with 7 additional topical videos launched in Q1 2014. Best practice videos have highlighted the benefits of broadband technology and the seven new videos feature topics such as mobile apps and choosing a cloud provider. In total,

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Initial and Supplemental Proposals awarded to Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) from the U.S. Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). UNL is the fiscal agent for the planning part of the grant, \$2,472,652.



there have been 3900 views of the various videos with an additional 700 views in Q2 2014. Videos are archived at <http://broadband.nebraska.gov/videos> or visit the YouTube channel has been created to host the videos - [Http://Youtube.com/broadbandnebraska](http://Youtube.com/broadbandnebraska).

- **Entrepreneur Acceleration System (EAS) DED.** An entrepreneurial mentoring program will focus on the human capital of the founders and their core teams that includes addressing how broadband can help strengthen entrepreneurs in the state. *Status:* The broadband component of this activity is complete.
- **Technical Assistance Expertise UNL/Steering Team.** The focus of this effort will be to provide technical assistance in the area of business and entrepreneurship to chambers of commerce, economic developers, and local and county stakeholders statewide and regionally to increase broadband adoption. *Status:* As a part of the business survey, a personalized scorecard to businesses was offered comparing the company's use of broadband with peer businesses in Nebraska and across the nation. During Q2 all businesses that were eligible to receive a scorecard have been contacted. When a business was interested in meeting with a coach the more likely that they were willing to take a step to increase their use of technology. Examples of business efforts include: A company that wanted specifics on how different technologies can help their business to wanting to develop a better database system. Other businesses are interested in expanding their business to utilize remote sensing.
- **Broadband Portal Development UNL.** Develop a central broadband portal which will serve as a source of information on broadband efforts in Nebraska. *Status:* Website officially launched in April 2012. Since that time there have been 21,448 visits and 14,425 unique visitors with an average visit of 3:49. During the last quarter April through June, there were 1,863 visits and 1,449 unique visitors. Marketing efforts continue to draw people to the website. Visitor top stops were to surveys, the broadband map and business efforts.

#### **Local and Regional Planning - \$318,049 Direct; \$394,177 Total Budget**

The Nebraska Broadband Local/Regional Technology Planning Teams program will augment regional planning approaches identified in the initial grant application with community planning, business and entrepreneurial discussions, government discussions, and agricultural discussions.

- **Regional Planning Teams UNL.** Regional planning teams will be formed to create the regional plans. *Status:* The regional plans were completed during Q3 2013 and featured at the Nebraska Broadband Conference during Q4 2013. No matter the region a common vision is that all residents and businesses will have access to digital information and communication tools and the training to skillfully use.
- **Statewide Plan NITC.** Under the direction of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission, planning is underway in four priority areas for the Nebraska Statewide Plan. Those priorities are: Digital Literacy and Adoption/Advanced Technology Training; Broadband Availability and Affordability; Economic Development; and Agriculture. The draft plan will be released at the broadband conference in October. Anticipate allowing for a 30 day public feedback period. Efforts will be made using social media and regular media distribution to gather input on the statewide plan.
- **Community Planning – North and South Omaha UNL/AIM Institute in North and South Omaha.** North and South Omaha were identified as underserved regions/areas through the survey of Nebraska households. *Status:* During the end of Q2 began conversations

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with organizations working with Latino businesses. The SNG survey has been shortened to a two page questionnaire to ask Hispanic business owners how they are using broadband/technology. The survey will be available through survey monkey and staff of the organizations will be interviewing businesses. Comparisons will be able to be made to the earlier business survey, inform future educational opportunities and challenge business owners to consider the possibilities. A workshop/conference is planned for October 2014.

- **Community Planning - Cultural and Unserved Communities UNL.** Additional community or local planning teams in regions/areas identified as underserved through the survey of Nebraska households and broadband mapping data. *Status:* A session with the tribal colleges has been posted until late Q2 due to schedule conflicts. The goal of the session will be to have a better understanding of what devices (i.e., computes, iPads) the tribal members have, what they do not have and what is their highest priority in terms of electronic communication. The goal will be to increase their awareness and use of technology. At this stage an activity has not been scheduled with the tribal colleges.
- **Focus Groups UNL.** Seven to 10 focus groups will be held with anchor institutions and utility providers as well as populations with low usage rates. *Status:* In 2013, 17 Focus Groups were held with 105 individuals participating to better understand the challenges and opportunities in the various regions of the state. Communities with adequate broadband focused on the opportunities. When broadband was not as reliable, the focus became on the challenges. Additional focus groups/listening sessions may be held to help move the initiative forward.
- **Community Sector Discussions UNL.** Community sector discussions will be held to further advance adoption of technology in specific industries such as business and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, agriculture and the health industry. The focus of each discussion will be to benchmark technology use across the specific sectors, set goals for improved technology, and develop a plan to achieve goals. *Status:* Libraries are key to the adoption and utilization of broadband. During Q2, conversation began to identify how to increase the confidence of librarians to answer patron questions regarding technology/broadband. The Library Commission estimates that 60% of librarians lack basic technology skills. The library commission is interested and plans are underway to initiate this project. Goal for basic training are to build librarians confidence that leads to the librarian answering patron questions. Indirect outcome - librarians will participate in on-line training in the future.

#### **Project Partner Steering Team:**

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